



SECTION
11

DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OR CONCERNS OF ABUSE

THIS GUIDANCE FORMS PART OF THE
CODE OF BEHAVIOUR (UNDERAGE)



The Gaelic Athletic Association, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association, GAA Handball Ireland and the Rounders Council of Ireland engage with tens of thousands of young people each week in the promotion and delivery of our Gaelic Games and must therefore, amongst the many responsibilities we face, be alert and be prepared to the possibility that children with whom we are working may be suffering from abuse or neglect.

We all have a legal duty of care to children and young people. This means that we have an obligation to provide them with the highest possible standards of care and safety as we promote their wellbeing and as we safeguard them from abuse, particularly while they are in our care or attending our activities.

Coupled with that responsibility and the assistance we provide in the form of training, policies, codes and legislation is the requirement to work closely with statutory authorities and to report allegations or concerns of abuse that may be known to us to the relevant authorities, in whatever jurisdiction in which we operate.

As organisations that provide a service to children we will assist our members and employees in whatever way possible in reporting concerns or suspicions of abuse whether it has come to our attention as a result of reported abuse within our Associations or due to external matters.

This section of the Code, Dealing with Allegations or Concerns of Abuse, provides a broad outline as to our roles and responsibilities in relation to reporting abuse, what is the role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Mandated Person, while Appendix 4 of this Code outlines definitions and types of abuse.

Detailed instruction and directives in relation to reporting abuse and neglect are contained in the joint policy booklet [‘Guidance for Dealing with and Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse’](#). The primary purpose of the Guidance is to ensure that reporting procedures are known to our members and staff, that guidance and assistance is available for those who wish to report concerns of abuse and neglect and that our Associations adhere in full to our legal obligations in respect of reporting abuse or neglect to the statutory authorities.



REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

The term 'Reasonable Grounds for Concern' is used where a person may form the view that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Child abuse may not be visible to all and we therefore rely on adults to be vigilant and to observe any forms of abuse and to ensure that such matters are reported to their Designated Liaison Person and to the relevant statutory authority. The term 'Reasonable Grounds for Concern' is used in many jurisdictions and similarly, if an individual has such concerns about an adult they should report such matters to the relevant statutory authority.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

Our Association DLPs, at Club, County or National level, will always be available to assist any person who may wish to report a concern to the relevant statutory authority. Mandated Persons, identified by our Associations, may also assist an individual in making a report or passing on a concern if they so wish.

It is not necessary for an individual to prove that abuse has occurred when they wish to report such matters. It is the role of the statutory authority to carry out their enquires and assess each case on its own merits. The Associations Mandated Person or the Club Designated Liaison Person may assist an individual in making a report or passing on a concern if they so wish.

The safety and well-being of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made. The welfare of the child shall always be paramount.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important that all parties dealing with concerns of allegations of abuse have a clear understanding as to what constitutes confidentiality and what is permissible in the exchange of information.

- Use and disclose the information collated only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was initially given
- If a young person discloses information relating to possible child abuse it cannot be dealt with as a 'secret' between the young person and the person to whom they have reported their concerns
- All information regarding concern or allegations of abuse should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed on a need to know basis only with those who need to know
- The sharing of information on a 'need to know basis' is not deemed to be a breach of confidentiality
- The sharing of information with statutory agencies or with your Association Mandated Person, solely for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection
- It must be clearly understood that information gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information

- Be aware that all persons involved in a child protection and welfare process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, coaches) should be afforded appropriate, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure
- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access internally only by the relevant Designated Persons or Association Mandated Person
- Breaches of confidentiality shall be deemed a serious matter and dealt with accordingly within the GAA, Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association, GAA Handball Ireland and GAA Rounders



ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP)

The Club or County Chairperson automatically assumes the role of DLP unless another person is chosen and ratified by the relevant Committee to undertake the role. The DLP should be ratified by their Club or County Committee on an annual basis. Detailed information on the Role of the Club and County Designated Liaison Person is available in Section 8 of the Code of Behaviour (Underage)

The Designated Liaison Person shall:

- Be aware and be committed to the Association's *Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse* and our *Code of Behaviour (Underage)*
- Have knowledge of relevant child protection and safeguarding legislation in the jurisdiction in which they operate
- Have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse
- Undertake relevant and recognised child safeguarding training (*Safeguarding 1 & 3*)
- Be aware of local contacts and services in relation to child protection i.e., principal and duty social workers and their contact details, Gardai/PSNI, Tusla/Gateway teams etc. (*Appendix 5 and 7*)
- Consult informally with statutory authorities on child abuse concerns or allegations, as required
- Communicate with parents and/or statutory agencies as and when appropriate
- Follow reporting procedures and inform Statutory Agencies and their Association's DLP/Mandated Person of any concerns or allegations as a matter of urgency
- Maintain regular contact with their Association DLP and the Mandated Person and seek their advice whenever required
- When reasonable grounds for concern exist where a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused, a report should be made without delay to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána, or to the relevant Gateway Team or PSNI
- Make a report to the statutory authorities, as appropriate, or make a joint report with a Mandated Person and without delay
- Always forward a copy of reported concerns and allegations received, whether reported to statutory authorities or not, to your Association's DLP/Mandated Person
- Advise Club administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection
- Inform the National DLP/Mandated Person if you are aware that a member of the Association, in your Club or County, is or has been subject to a statutory investigation, a prosecution or a conviction in relation to the abuse of a child or an adult
- Make themselves known to their immediate membership and in particular to team mentors, managers and to parents

Club Executive Committees and County Boards shall appoint a Designated Liaison Person. The Club or County Chairperson automatically assumes the role of DLP unless another person is chosen and ratified by the relevant Committee to undertake the role.

MANDATED PERSON

The Children First Act 2015 (ROI) places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla - Child and Family Agency 'as soon as practicable'. These people, known as 'Mandated Persons' must also assist Tusla, on request, in its assessment of child protection concerns about children who have been the subject of a mandated report.

Mandated Persons are people who have contact with children and/or families who, by virtue of their qualifications, training and experience, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated Persons include key professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth, sports and childcare sectors.

The majority of volunteers in sports clubs are not Mandated Persons. A Mandated Person is normally a paid professional. However, there are some situations where a paid professional (or other unpaid persons due to their profession) volunteering in a sports club may be regarded as a mandated person.

Please note, and in accordance with the Child Safeguarding statement issued by the Gaelic Games Associations that Clubs, Counties and other units are obliged to maintain a list of members who, if known, and in accordance with legislation are specified as Mandated Persons, regardless of what role (if any) they hold in our Associations.

Mandated Persons may include:

- A person who is employed by a sports club or sports organisation to be the a 'safeguarding officer, child protection officer' and 'is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function' of the sporting organisation, is a mandated person. (This does not apply to DLPs in local Clubs)
- A member of An Garda Síochána, who is a mandated person 24/7
- A physiotherapist, acting in their role as a physiotherapist for the sports Club
- A doctor or nurse, whose role in the Club is that of a doctor or nurse administering medical assistance
- A counsellor, whose role in the Club is that of providing counselling

Volunteers in our Associations are not identified as mandated persons but will continue to report any allegations or concerns of child abuse, internally in their Association as per Association rules and externally to the relevant statutory authority as per legislation.

The Mandated Person now has a legal and Association role in that if they know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, they must report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to Tusla. A similar directive applies in our Associations to reporting such matters to Gateway Services teams in Northern Ireland.

The Mandated Person must report concerns of harm above a particular threshold to the statutory authorities.

The Mandated Persons in our Gaelic Games Associations may be contacted at:**GAA/Rounders** mandatedperson@gaa.ie**LGFA** mandatedperson@lgfa.ie**Camogie** mandatedperson@camogie.ie**Handball** mandatedperson.handball@gaa.ie

- » *Appendix 4 of this Code outlines types of child abuse and how they may be defined*
- » *Appendix 5 contains contact details for Tusla Child and Family Agency*
- » *Appendix 6 contains Standard Report Forms for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns to Tusla*
- » *Appendix 7 contains contact details for Health and Social Care Trusts NI*



Produced by the Child Safeguarding Committee in association with
Cumann Lúthcleas Gael, Cumann Camógaíochta, Cumann Peil na mBan,
Liathróid Láimhe CLG na hÉireann and Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann.

